



Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee

Minutes

Date: July 21st, 2021

Time: 7:15PM

Location: Via Zoom conference

Attendees: *Executive committee:* Christopher Tonkin (chair), Jack Johnson, Muris Kobaslija, Adam MacNeill, Doug Mayo-Wells (secretary), Scott Smith (TAC liaison)

Town of Arlington: Daniel Amstutz (Sr Transportation Planner)

Members of the public: Linda Epstein (resident), Petru Sofio (resident)

Reference materials:

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/updated-guidance-on-holding-meetings-pursuant-to-the-act-extending-certain-covid-19-measures>

<https://www.arlingtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/57282/637624920260970000>

1. Greetings and Introductions, ground rules for online meetings.

Christopher Tonkin advised that the meeting is held remotely related to COVID-19 measures adopted during the State of Emergency. Tonkin notified attendees that Committee secretary Doug Mayo-Wells is taking minutes; the meeting is being recorded for the purposes of verifying the minutes; and the recording will be deleted after the minutes are approved. Tonkin confirmed the committee members and others in attendance for the meeting.

2. Approval of the outstanding minutes for previous meetings

Deferred as minutes are not available for review.

3. Report from COBWEB Officer.

Deferred as no officer is available.

4. TAC (Transportation Advisory Committee) report

- Initial recommendations for Chestnut St (in response to pedestrian fatality in 2019) have been approved by the Select Board. Plan improves crosswalk, and should eventually include bike lanes, although there are some challenges with intersection geometry.
- TAC received a request from abutters related to 2-way traffic on the private way portion of Washington St (off of Brattle St). TAC is working to retain bike access, e.g., if Washington St becomes 1-way north/west-bound, there would be a short contra-flow bike lane from the Bikeway intersection to Brattle St. (Since it is a private way, residents would need to pay for improvements.) It is noted that this road is in poor condition, and delivery vehicle traffic has increased substantially on it.
- Restriping Lowell Street by the Reservoir; initial plan had wide travel lanes, but there is room for shared lane markings next to parked cars, and a bike lane on the reservation side. Communicating with DPW to ensure bike facilitation is in the plan. ABAC input could also be beneficial. There was a pedestrian fatality on Lowell St in 2007; wide travel lanes increase vehicle speed and the likelihood of crashes. A speed feedback sign and flashing beacon at the crosswalk were recommended by TAC and approved by the Select Board in 2017 but have not yet been installed; those features are out to bid in the next several weeks.

Action: Christopher Tonkin will email DPW to make the point that it would be beneficial to reduce travel lane width/add bike facilitation in conjunction with implementing the other safety features

5. Lake Street crossing, is it fully functional?

The walk signal is now not synched with the green bike signal, Petru Sofio opened a request/answer center ticket for this. Speed feedback sign flashes if vehicle is above the speed limit, displays a smiley face if under. Anecdotal observation that vehicles above limit may get a red signal, but not clear if this is coincidence. Visibility of light for westbound motorists seems improved (but not for eastbound traffic). Bike lane markings and shared lane markings have not yet been applied. Continuing to observe vehicles turning onto the Bikeway from Lake St, with at least one continuing on the Bikeway to Linwood St. Barrels or bollards may be called for, or no vehicle traffic sign. (Need to maintain access for plows/emergency vehicles, although Lexington policy on this is

different.) Presence of the parking lot west of the bikeway may contribute to driver confusion.

Will raise these issues as part of the new Bikeway Planning project, and try to identify permanent solutions.

Action: Petru Sofio suggested to file a police report for the incident of the vehicle driving from Lake St to Linwood St on the bikeway, and to schedule a walk through with Christopher Tonkin.

6. Mass Ave/Mystic St/Bikeway traffic signal intersection counts, report, and next steps

See: https://www.massbike.org/arlingtonbikecounts_petrusofio

Conducted counts on Saturday June 19 and Tuesday June 22. Went well overall, busy on Saturday (an event at Uncle Sam park may have contributed). Many counters noted right turns on red signals. Last hour of counting was canceled on Tuesday due to heavy rain.

Some details:

- Roughly 10% of westbound traffic continues from bike lane on to Mass Ave westbound, instead of the bikeway (rather than using the sharrow in the through vehicle lane)
- Continuing to see inconsistent use of bike box, some cyclists turn left with vehicle left turn signal, some walk bike from curb into bike box
- Bike box overflowed multiple times per hour, roughly 25% of the time
- 7-8am on Tuesday, surprised by number of riders going eastbound in the westbound bike lane to get to Swan Pl to continue East on the bikeway
- Observed eastbound cyclists running the red light at Swan Pl to continue East on Mass Ave (some stopped first). It was noted that the merge back into the vehicle lane just east of Swan Pl is tricky; better signal coordination would help.

Will be providing data to the consultant as part of the Bikeway project, recommendations from the transportation consultant may have more leverage.

It may be helpful to address some signal issues in advance of the consultant engagement, e.g. the question of green vertical arrows for straight-only vs. solid green circle, as has previously been suggested. It may also be beneficial for the consultant to meet directly with ABAC to get input on issues. Providing previous correspondence from ABAC and East Arlington Livable Streets (EALS) may also be helpful.

Action: Daniel Amstutz will forward count summary to the committee (waiting on one more set of data)

7. Update on the Design Review Committee for Mass Ave/Appleton

Green International (design consultant selected for the project) presented 2 plans, option 2 was more bike friendly. Many more attendees, including colleagues and associates of Charlie Proctor (who was killed in a crash at the intersection on May 5, 2020), but also more residents. Residents and representatives of local businesses opposed the parking restrictions of version 2. Phil Goff (member of the DRC, also co-chair of EALS) moved that the committee accept option 2 and present to the Select Board, the motion passed with an 8-3 vote. The local business representative on the Committee voted with the majority.

One area of concern is the DPW representative was not able to attend all meetings with the consultant; Phil Goff, DPW, Planning Department, APD, and consultant are meeting on July 22nd to try to resolve areas of concern before presenting the proposal to the Select Board at the August meeting (or possibly returning to the DRC depending on scope of proposed changes). The Select Board is also hearing concerns about parking from residents; this potentially represents the single most significant reduction of parking in the past several years. It would be beneficial for the board to hear from residents supportive of the proposal.

It was noted that most of the eliminated parking spaces are on the south side of Mass Ave. Because it is a poor pedestrian crossing, patrons of business on the north side of Mass Ave may prefer not to park on the south side.

It was also noted that improving pedestrian and bike access generally helps businesses; data from East Arlington may help to make this case.

It was also noted that prioritizing parking over safety is personally upsetting to the family of the deceased.

8. MassBike: Bike week 2021 is September 19th-26th. ABAC involvement?

Planned activities for Bike Week include a bike rodeo (safety training for kids), bike counts, group ride. Arlington's participation would be helpful for Bike Friendly Community certification goals. Some possibilities for ABAC involvement:

- Hand out swag

- Bike tour of Arlington, similar to what we have done before, possibly with staggered start-times/multiple groups to limit number of riders in a group
- Self-guided/self-paced socially-distanced bike tour with volunteers at each station to talk about the location either from bike infrastructure or local history perspective
- Conduct another bike count
- Opportunity to promote/inform public about Minuteman Bikeway project

The committee's understanding is that there is no Town Day planned for 2021.

It is noted that it is hard to predict the state of the pandemic in September, so any planning needs to be somewhat flexible. 6-8 weeks advance notice is optimum for promoting an event, so it would be good to lock in a date ASAP, and can promote before finalizing all details. Tentatively Sunday September 26 with details to be finalized.

Action: Working group (Christopher Tonkin, Jack Johnson, Scott Smith) to meet Sunday 9am (confirm by email) at Kickstand Cafe to discuss further.

9. General updates from Daniel:

See: <https://www.arlingtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/57282>

a. MBTA Bus Network Redesign

- Reimagine to be simpler to understand, create more equitable network, make transit competitive with other modes of travel, maximize access to opportunities
- Survey: <https://www.mbtta.com/projects/better-bus-project/update/take-the-bus-network-redesign-travel-survey>

b. Bike Friendly Community designation and report card

- "Report card" from League of American Bicyclists identifies steps for Arlington to progress from Silver to Gold status
- Gold status is identified as a goal by the Connect Arlington sustainable transportation plan

c. Data update Swan Place Eco Counter and Blue Bikes

- Year-to-year comparisons are a bit tricky because of counter malfunctions in November 2019, August 2020, and March 2021, but tracking toward

2019 numbers; several 3,000+ trip days in the past month. Weekdays continue to show expected commuting patterns, with peaks in early morning and late afternoon/early evening. Weekends approximate a bell curve, with peak in early afternoon.

- Bluebikes: 3,855 trips YTD (+2,235 since last month). Greatest number of trips near Bikeway; Railroad lot & Linwood St are ~50% of all trips; Thorndike was the only station operating through winter. Have not equaled Lime bikes peak month usage (but Lime had far more bikes in Town, unrestricted pick-up/drop-off locations, and a novelty factor, so not an apples-apples comparison). Relocating stations to improve performance is being considered, but many constraining factors, prioritizing finding permanent locations for stations. Bluebikes target performance is 1,700 trips/month, Arlington is performing better than some communities and there is active discussion around adjusting this goal, several communities concerned that it is unrealistic. Suggestions are made to identify the farthest out station with signage, and to move Mass Ave/Grafton closer to Capitol Square (given no-parking restrictions on side streets in the area).
- Attended webinar on bike count data moderated by the League of American Bicyclists, with participation from Eco Counter, but also including recommendations for conducting manual counts
<https://www.biketreasurevalley.org/bike-count-data>

d. Chestnut Street at Chestnut Terrace

- Pedestrian fatality in January 2020
- Select Board approved TAC recommendations at June 21, 2021 meeting
- Safety improvement recommendations include bump outs, refuge island, pedestrian-activated warning beacon, lane narrowing with bike lanes, and work to identify possible longer-term geometric changes to Mystic/Chestnut
- Working through implementation challenges

e. Minuteman Bikeway Planning Project

- 6 proposals, 4 acceptable, 2 vendors interviewed, recommending Kittelson & Associates, contract forthcoming
- Project kick-off in August (at earliest)
- Goals/tasks include: review and recommendations for maintenance, safety, waysides/staying areas, policies & education, artwork; also visioning
- Meetings between ABAC and consultant to be scheduled

f. Connect Arlington

- Endorsed by Select Board at July 19 meeting
- Overall goals and vision endorsed but further items must be brought back for approval
- Includes bike network, some items already in progress, but still work required to improve process for prioritizing and implementing work

10. Tales from the Bikeway, matters arising from the Bikeway

Tabled due to limited time.

11. Cambridge Bicycle Plan

See

<https://www.cambridgema.gov/Departments/communitydevelopment/2020bikeplanupdate> (video on this page provides a useful overview)

- 5-year planning cycle, but 2020 plan released June 2021
- Updated for Vision Zero, Complete Streets policies, BlueBikes growth
- Safe Routes to School established in all public schools, may have useful guidance for Arlington
- Discusses public bike workshops and 2019 cycling safety ordinance (which requires separated bike lanes for street reconstruction)
- Missing holistic view of larger network, connections to Arlington, Somerville, etc., but this may be difficult to coordinate because of jurisdiction issues.

12. Other Business

Contacted Daniel about the damaged fence at former Gold's Gym, wire was hanging over the bikeway. The wire has been removed, however, there's still a hole in the fence, over a culvert where there has previously been flood damage. May still need assessment/fixes.

Received email from Kevin Falcone of Lexington Bike Advisory Committee, he will be leaving Lexington and resigning as Chair. He reminds us that we have a Tri-town Bike meeting scheduled for November.

Cambridge has announced that by April 2022 there will be protected bike lanes on Mass Ave from the Arlington border to Dudley St, would be good to coordinate for smooth transition for cyclists crossing between Cambridge/Arlington.

New bike store, "Battle Road Bikes," has opened on Mass Ave, just over Lexington line, but Crimson Bikes in Cambridge is in Chapter 11 bankruptcy.

On the ramp from Rt 2 to Alewife, the temporary pedestrian crosswalk was removed when bridge construction activities were completed. This is unfortunate, since the temporary facilitation improved pedestrian access to Alewife Brook reservation walking paths and nearby businesses.

Fence installed at bikeway and Ryder street, this negatively impacts visibility and reduces safety of trail access. The Town is aware of concerns, the situation is complicated by Town DPW lot and right-of-way issues. Ideally if the Town could purchase the right-of-way from the MBTA the Town would have more direct control.

Action: Christopher Tonkin will reach out to Cambridge (city/bike community) and see if someone is available to attend ABAC meeting and discuss opportunities to plan for border transitions

Action: Christopher Tonkin will ask Phil Goff to share his presentation (and/or recording of it) to the Somerville BAC with ABAC, and invite him to attend the next ABAC meeting to discuss.

Scott Smith moves to adjourn

Christopher Tonkin seconds; motion carries, 5-0

Adjourned